Ainsley Olson: Hi, everyone. This is Ainsley Olson, I'm with Ezra Temko’s Art of Drag Class, and joining me, we have…

Desiré: My name is Desiré Declyne.

Olson: Perfect. So can I have you just introduce yourself and your drag?

Desiré: Absolutely. Desiree, she's been a part of my life for about 18 years now, and I, the way I kind of see her is, like that lounge singer that never really made it, you know, but has the ego that she has, like that kind of, like gravitas of like, I'm too good for this, or, you know, kind of thing, very kind of Madeline Ashton, he in, like, Death Becomes Her. I kind of like, borrow from the icon. what are queer icons, character wise? So like, Madeline, Ashton, Lucille Ball, Auntie Mame, like, all this, oh, thank you. They get it, things like that. Like, I kind of pull from those and, like, take little bits that make me feel a little bit more powerful, and kind of like, mash them all together into to this, like, massive disappointment of a character, absolutely with nothing to back it up at all.

Olson: We'll see tonight: we’ll be the judges.

Desiré: Absolutely.

Olson: where did your name come from?

Desiré: A couple different places. So Desiré came from my favorite musical, which is A Little Night Music by Stephen Sondheim. One of the main characters is named Desiré in that and I was like, Oh, that's perfect. Kind of gives me a little nod to my theater roots and everything like that. And then decline came, because while I was in college, earning my BFA for musical theater, I was working at a theater in Springfield, Missouri, called the landers theater. With Springfield little theater. We were doing a kids summer camp, and part of that camp was like, the kids got to write their own bios and like everything for the playbill for the show that they were doing. And our marketing manager did not realize that that meant she would have to be typing them all up like, and then at the same time making the kids like, like, deciphering, you know, chicken scratch from kids, right? So we decided, as a prank to her to, like, put a few different ones in, and one of the ones got put in was Visa Decline. And I liked the last name, but I wanted to change the spelling of it, just because I didn't want it to look like I was just, you know, using the using actual words. I thought, I thought I was gonna be artistic and different, so I did it.

Olson: I like that. Yeah, that's a really funny origin story. It is wild, all right, um, what inspired you to start doing drag 18 years ago?

Desiré: Um, it was just, it was a way for me to kind of like, because when I was growing up, I didn't have, you know, in theater you would get, you know, back when I was growing up, if you were assigned male at birth, you only would get cast in male roles. And I wanted a way to get to play Tracy Turnblatt. I wanted to get to play like Lucy the Slut from Avenue Q, like all of these iconic female roles that I would never get to touch and normally like Dolly Levi in Hello Dolly, like they all had this magic about them, and I wanted a chance to get to play them. So drag was kind of how it came to be, like I got, I got the opportunity to express that and create, not only emulate those characters, but out of that, create my own character. You know?

Olson: Yeah, awesome. Then last one for the intros: you are a St Louis drag queen…

Desiré: Yes.

Olson: How would you describe the St Louis drag scene, and how you fit into it?

Desiré: The St Louis drag scene, if there was, I would probably say that it's ever evolving. Like there are so many different drag artists that do what they do so well that I can't even, like in my 18 years of doing drag, even hold a candle too. Like there are amazing, amazing entertainers like like Gabrielle and Chloe Curiosity and Blair Warner. They do bimbo vision. They like Moxie Mayhem. Does her Club Weirdo stuff, which insane. The creativity in this city is beyond insane. And I love that I am living in a city that not only embraces it, but like is there and supports every single one right? We celebrate everybody, like no one specific I know there are a lot of like, drag kings or like male entertainers that don't feel like they get their due. I feel like in St Louis, St Louis is one of those cities that like, there's a space for that. There's space for everybody, and we all get. To do what we love to do, which is entertaining a crowd. It. So I feel very lucky to be part of the St Louis drag scene as an observer.

Olson: Like, that's exactly what I see. Like, there really is space for just anybody that wants to have one. Absolutely love that.

All right, so do you have a drag family?

Desiré: Um, we do. It's a— It's kind of like little misfitty. We're not. We're not nearly as close as like, if you would see, like, drag families from in from like the ballroom scenes or anything like that, we're not. We don't do that like I I've had many different mothers in my life, and matriarchal figures who have helped me get to the point that I am, and then I've done a lot. We do have a lot of people like even I have my own kids, but none of them like because my drag moms were like, you don't get to take my name like you don't, because they wanted me to create my own opportunities and not ride. And I'm not saying anybody with, like, iconic drag families, like they don't do I'm not accusing them of doing that, because I don't think that they do. Everybody does their own work. But like my specific family, like we just said, you know, choose your own last name. You know, you are. You are your own kind of like creation, exactly, and I'm there to support you and help you however I can, but you're the one that's going to be doing the work. Yeah,say ask if you could describe your relationship with your family. But we kind of got that. We're all kooky, crazy. Like, honestly, it's, it's a little bit like, it feels very sitcomy, okay, actually, like, and that's extended, like, even like Chris and Russ, we are lighting designer and sound designer, like they are, they are just as big of a part of our family. You know, without the wigs and heels, they're still part of it onto performance.

Olson: What is your favorite part of performing?

Desiré: My favorite part of performing is honestly taking taking a moment and like pulling people out of whatever has been going on in their life, you know, like, because it kind of has the same effect on me, yeah, as an entertainer, like, when I'm all strapped up and, like, I've got the wig on and everything like that, Desiree decline does not have the problems that I have in regular, everyday life, so it gives me a little bit of a break from everything that's happening. And seeing, seeing and realizing that it does, it has the same effect on people in the audience. You know, we never know what kind of day anybody's had. And the fact that I get to kind of like, come out here and help people forget about what's going on in everyday life and give them just a couple hours worth of a break. Means the absolute world, such an honor.

Olson: All right, kind of boring. But do you have a full time job?

Desiré: No, not, right now.

Olson: So does drag support you just drag right right now?

Desiré: I'm luckily through Dragon, like, some things that I've been able to, like, do on the side, it's I've been able to survive, but I've been looking for, like, yeah, regular employment for about six months now. Wow, is it hard to find it in the city. It is super rough. Like, I've, I've a couple months ago, or no, not months, a couple weeks ago, I applied to my 1,000th job. And, like, it's, it's been a, it's been a humbling journey, I'll say that, yeah, it's been very humbling. But also, at the same time, like, getting told that I'm overqualified for things and I'm like, but that means I can do the job, right? Like, so hire me to do the job. I'll show you that I'm ever qualified, all right, that part, I'll tell you if I'm qualified or not.

Olson: yes, interesting, yeah. I was gonna ask how you balanced drag and work. But if drag is work…

Desiré: Well, back when I was working, it was, you know, you have to do the whole thing. Like you work. You work your hours that you're supposed to work. And, you know, I don't bring, I do my best to not, because I, when I do work, I work in the like, kind of like HR and culture DEI field, and I do my best to make sure that things that are going on outside that have nothing to do with work are not brought into work. Yes, you know, because once you get all that stuff mixed up, it's a little, it gets a little kooky,

crazy, not in the good way, right? Exactly. Start having meetings with HR, and it's just like, not cute.

Olson: Okay, where do you see your drag or St Louis drag evolving in the future?

Desiré: Honestly, I don't know, but I'm excited to be part of the ride. Yeah. Like. One of the things that I love about drag is that, like, even if we've got GPS, like, telling us where to go, like, drag is there are no rules, really, except for the basic ones. You know, don't hurt people, don't kill people, you know, yes, but like it it's going to be exciting to see where it goes. Yeah, I'm excited to have a front row seat to it.

Olson: You know, being a pioneer yourself, of course…

Desiré: Oh, start. A pioneer way above just means that I'm I stand on the shoulders of some very iconic queens in the local scene. You know, people like Tamara Mahoning, people like candy James, people like Michelle McCausland, who, if it weren't for Michelle, like, we wouldn't be able to do drag in the city of St Louis, because in the 80s, there were masquerading laws that said if you were assigned male at birth, you had to have at least three articles of clothing on at all times. And Michelle was the one that said, like, you know, fuck that. I'm not doing it, and was arrested and went to her court date in full drag. And because of because of her wit and her like tenacity, those laws don't exist in St Louis anymore. So it's because of all that that like getting to stand on her shoulders and then understanding that I'm now one of those people that, like, people look up to right, like, my shoulders are now ones that people are going to start standing on, yeah, so, like, you know…

Olson: How do you feel about that responsibility? It,

Desiré: It's a little jarring at first, just because I'm not— I don’t— I like to cling to my youth, but it's kind of an honor that I've been able to grow this much and be one of those people.

Olson: Yeah, that's really inspiring. Actually, I'm taking that home with me.

Desiré: Do it. Oh my god, do it.

Olson: Okay! And then last couple… Do you have any upcoming projects that you would like to promote or share?

Desiré: Oh,my God, all the time. Yes. So October, 13 and 20th, the Prismatic crew, we're doing Ghouls Just want to have Brunch, which is our 80s Halloween themed brunch. So it's going to be a lot of fun, very campy, very silly. And then in November, we're doing our Eras brunch as well. So it's all Taylor crazy. It's gonna be insane. So it's, it's very exciting time. And then December, we usually do like some form of Christmas show. But you know, we're always doing fun themes and fun things for everybody.

Olson: So, where can people find you on social media?

Desiré: On social media, they can find me, I'm @desideclyne, or they can just follow Prismatic Events STL, and they'll show you everything that we're all up to, all the Kooky, crazy stuff that we're doing.

Olson: Yeah! That's all I have for you, is there anything else you wanted to add?

Desiré: There's a lot of different things that I get to impart on to people, but there is one quote from a Broadway legend that I always, always, always love. I think it still might be one of my signatures on my on my emails. There is no thrill in the world like doing work that you're good at, and it I never understood it until, like, I started doing drag. So it means the absolute world that's great.

Olson: Well, thank you so much.

Desiré: Thank you. I'm so excited!